inhabitated villages in the country as per Census 2001. Out of this, 5,30,624 villages have been provided with Village Public Telephones (VPTs) facility. It has been decided to provide the VPT facility in all the remaining 62,977 uncovered villages also with subsidy support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) in a period of two years.

(b) to (e) As per present policy of Unified Access Service Licences (UASL), there is no roll out obligation for Private Basic Service Operators (PBSOs) to provide telephones in rural areas. However, USO Fund is being extensively deployed for providing subsidy support to increase the penetration of telecom services in rural areas. Apart from BSNL, PBSOs are also participating in various schemes for provision of telecom facilities in rural areas under subsidy support of USOF though bidding process.

Information technology cities

1877. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to build 43 new information technology cities across the country to retain its status in the business and to be in a position to tap the huge surge in demand for IT enabled services over the next 10 years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the proposal has been cleared by the Planning Commission; and

(d) whether these new towns would provide steady supply of workers and generate employment for millions of people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (d) No, Sir. The names of these 43 cities have emerged as part of a study conducted by National Association of Software Companies (NASSCOM). There is no proposal before the Government to build these new Information Technology cities.

Subscriber base in rural areas

1878. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether to capture the new subscriber base in rural areas, the BSNL has since contemplated any measures;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the private sector telecom companies are ahead of BSNL in capturing the subscriber base in rural areas; and

(d) if so, the strategy to be adopted by BSNL to capture the rural sector and to provide better facilities than private telecom companies?